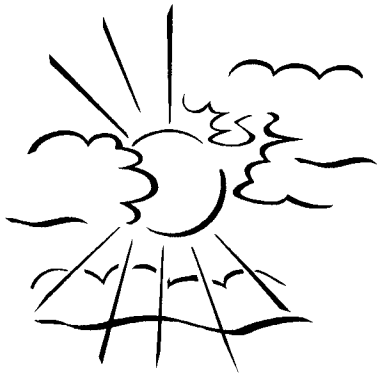


***Department  
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\*Important story at this spot

# **Articles in Today's Clips**

## **Thursday, June 30, 2005**

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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## **Marianne Udow and Chris Kolb: House budget would punish neediest**

Over the past few weeks, there's been a lot of rhetoric and misinformation about the welfare system and the families we serve through the Department of Human Services. It's time to set the record straight.

On June 9, the Michigan House passed an ill-conceived, poorly researched omnibus budget bill that would have a devastating impact on many Michigan families. The House prefers to protect corporate tax loopholes over Michigan families.

There is no argument that those capable of becoming self-sufficient should. Tax dollars should never be used to support able-bodied adults who are capable of functioning independent of state support.

But the cuts offered by the Legislature will eliminate benefits to some of our most fragile families and eliminate the social safety net for thousands struggling with mental illness and chronic health problems.

The House would end cash assistance support for 48,000 Michiganians, including 36,000 children, simply because they have needed this support for a total of four years. Many are already working, but in such low-wage jobs that they are still below the poverty level. Others are dealing with devastating health issues or disabilities, or caring for a disabled family member.

Over half are functionally illiterate.

Eliminating cash assistance will leave children hungry, less able to learn and many will end up in foster care when their parents can no longer afford clothing or basic shelter.

The House would also cut assistance levels by more than \$500 for those vulnerable families.

Cash assistance levels in Michigan haven't increased in 15 years. For a family of three, cash assistance provides \$5,500 per year - an income 65 percent below the poverty level. No one is getting rich on these payments.

Reducing the rates for our poorest citizens is unconscionable.

The House would cut child care an additional \$38 million, affecting more than 43,000 children. Payment levels will be so low children will be at risk of being left in unsafe situations, or their parents will no longer be able to work.

The cuts would further reduce staff who provide child abuse services and adult protective services, food stamps, emergency financial and other help to those who cannot otherwise meet their basic needs. Many of our staff already carry unmanageable caseloads of 250 to 400; a 38 percent increase in caseloads in five years. The House bill would force cuts of an additional 700 department staffers.

This is a recipe for a disaster.

Not only does the House budget fail to reflect the values of our state, it is not fiscally smart.

Under the House budget, \$97 million in federal dollars will be returned to Washington to save \$79 million in state funds.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm has proposed a budget that makes tough choices and is balanced but maintains compassion and support for the most vulnerable. In contrast to the House, Granholm

has proposed a budget that closes corporate tax loopholes instead of balancing the budget on the backs of the poor.

It is the right thing to do.

Marianne Udow is director of the state Department of Human Services. State Rep. Chris Kolb is an Ann Arbor Democrat.

# House approves stripped budgets to move along process

6/28/2005, 6:44 p.m. ET

**The Associated Press**

LANSING, Mich. (AP)

— The House voted Tuesday to return 16 budget bills to the Senate, moving on to the next step to setting a budget for the fiscal year that starts Oct. 1.

The bills dealt with funding for a number of state departments, the judiciary and K-12 education across the state.

The Senate bills had been stripped of their funding earlier Tuesday by the House Appropriations Committee. The Senate voted last week to return to the House the House's one spending plan without its \$39.7 billion in funding.

No decision has been reached on whether the Legislature will eventually produce one budget bill covering all of state spending, as the House has done, or bills for different departments or areas of spending, as has traditionally been done. The Senate has passed more than a dozen separate budget bills.

The budget bills eventually will go to House-Senate conference committees where lawmakers from both chambers will work out the differences in their spending plans.

"We believe we have a working agreement in how they will be handled in committee," House Speaker Craig DeRoche, R-Novi, said Tuesday.

Republican legislative leaders and Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm will begin budget negotiations in the coming weeks. The House and Senate are scheduled to be in session for one day a week over the summer months to continue work on the budget and other legislation.

The Senate budget bills are Senate Bills 264-81. The House omnibus budget House Bill 4831.

On the Net:

Michigan Legislature: <http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

Special Update, Thursday, June 30, 2005, 11:56 am

## **HOUSE G.O.P. UNVEILS ITS TAX PLAN**

House Republicans announced a plan Thursday that would provide broad tax relief to Michigan businesses totaling \$268 million in 2005-06 while paying for their proposal through the closure of tax loopholes and other revenue enhancements.

The plan would let businesses credit a portion of the personal property taxes they pay toward the Single Business Tax they owe. Manufacturers would get a 25 percent credit and a 10 percent credit would be given to all other businesses except utilities.

Republicans called for changing the Single Business Tax formula to base it 100 percent on sales. And they proposed revising legislation they passed earlier this year that would remove the cost of health care from how businesses calculate their SBT to phase it out over a five-year period instead of immediately.

The GOP plan also would reduce the "alternate tax" paid by businesses whose value is below the threshold to require paying the Single Business Tax from 2 percent to 1 percent.

Republicans propose to make up for lost revenues by eliminating \$100 million in yet to be identified tax loopholes, \$32 million in interest earnings from the securitization of three-quarters of the state's share of the national tobacco settlement, a \$10 million transfer from the Comprehensive Transportation Fund and by embracing a Senate proposal to increase tax auditors to collect an additional \$56 million in revenue.

The final \$70 million would come from the unsecuritized portion of the tobacco settlement, which the state would continue to receive in annual payments.

For the 2005-06 fiscal year, the House Fiscal Agency said the plan would have no net reduction on revenues. But in the subsequent four years, the plan would reduce revenues by a net of \$383.3 million.

Separate from these proposals on the Single Business Tax, House Republicans also proposed reducing the SBT rate from 1.9 percent to 1.7 percent over several years if revenues rise from year to year. Revenues lost through

this proposal are not figured into the above numbers.

House Republicans said they would not vote on the plan on Thursday.

## **HOUSE G.O.P. TO UNVEIL TAX, MERIT AWARD PLANS**

House Republicans have scheduled a Thursday news conference to announce their proposals for \$1 billion in business tax relief over five years and selling three-quarters of the state's share of the national tobacco settlement to create a secure funding source for the Merit Award scholarship and to fund investment in the state's economy.

The House GOP will propose selling 75 percent of the state's annual tobacco settlement revenues to investors in exchange for an upfront, lump-sum payment of \$3 billion, a process called securitization. The state receives about \$280 million from the tobacco companies each year and is scheduled to continue receiving similar payments in perpetuity or as long as the tobacco companies exist.

House Republicans will propose spending \$1 billion of the money on an economic investment plan to lure cutting-edge businesses to Michigan (see related story). They will propose spending \$1.5 billion on a new fund for the Merit Award scholarship, which receives its funding from tobacco settlement revenues, that would be administered by the state's public universities. And they will propose directing the remaining \$500 million to the Medicaid Benefits Trust Fund.

The \$1 billion economic investment plan is a bipartisan one that was developed in concert with a House Democrat and gained the support of Democratic Governor Jennifer Granholm.

But it appears House Republicans will not propose using securitized tobacco settlement revenue to offset the revenues lost through their business tax cuts – an idea that they seriously considered.

The GOP tax plan, which could be voted on by the full House as soon as Thursday, is expected to include relief on the personal property tax and alter how businesses calculate how much Single Business Tax they owe by basing the tax entirely on revenues from sales.

"We would deem our tax plan to be significant," said House Speaker Craig DeRoche (R-Novi), declining to provide details.

House Republican sources said their plan would provide \$1 billion in business tax relief over five years with roughly \$200 million each year. They said it would be paid for through spending cuts, the remaining unsecuritized portion of the tobacco settlement (about \$70 million a year) and possibly by eliminating some of the so-called tax expenditures that Ms. Granholm has called for scrapping.

House Republicans and House Democrats had been negotiating for several days to try to find a compromise between a Republican proposal and Ms. Granholm's tax plan, but those negotiations did not yield an agreement.

Ms. Granholm has proposed a plan would cut the Single Business Tax rate from 1.9 percent to 1.2 percent, change the tax's formula to base it 100 percent on sales, provide a credit to manufacturers on personal property taxes paid, end some current credits like those for unincorporated companies and create a 2 percent tax on insurance companies' premiums (SB 295, SB 296, HB 4476, HB 4477).

The key piece for Ms. Granholm and legislative Democrats is that it provide immediate relief, especially to manufacturers, and be revenue-neutral.

Rep. Paul Condino (D-Southfield), who has been in the recent talks, said he expects the GOP plan will leave a hole in the budget. "We'll look at it, but we're very skeptical of any plan that's not revenue-neutral," he said.

The concept behind creating a secure pot of money for the Merit Award that universities would administer is to shield it from efforts by the state to discontinue or cut the program. Ms. Granholm has proposed during her more than two years in office several cutbacks in the program, including reducing the \$2,500 high school scholarship to \$500, eliminating the \$500 middle school award and, most recently, ending the high school award for scoring well on the state's standardized test and instead giving \$4,000 for completing two years of post-high school education.



Jun 30, 12:31 AM EDT

## **House GOP wants to get \$3 billion from tobacco settlement**

By AMY F. BAILEY  
Associated Press Writer

LANSING, Mich. (AP) -- Republican state representatives want to sell off some future tobacco revenue for a lump sum payment of \$3 billion to boost investment, guarantee college scholarships and secure funding for Medicaid, a spokesman for House Speaker Craig DeRoche says.

The House GOP also is proposing to cut taxes by \$1 billion over five years to make the state more attractive to businesses already here and those considering locating in Michigan, DeRoche spokesman Matt Resch said Wednesday.

DeRoche, R-Novi, was scheduled to lay out the details of the House Republican economic stimulus plan at a 10 a.m. EDT news conference in the Capitol.

The House Republican plan would forego a portion of the tobacco settlement revenue to get an immediate lump sum payment of \$3 billion. Supporters of the proposal point out that it would create investment funds to boost the economy immediately without approval from voters.

Under the 1999 tobacco settlement, Michigan expects to collect about \$8 billion over 25 years.

Half of the \$3 billion of the sold off tobacco settlement would guarantee funding for the Michigan Merit Award for a generation of college-bound students, Resch said. The 15 public universities would administer the scholarship fund instead of the state, he said.

The \$2,500 scholarships go to high school students who do well on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program test and enroll in a Michigan college.

"Our goal from day one was to create a plan that cuts taxes, does not saddle taxpayers with billions of dollars in debt and puts people back to work. This plan will accomplish that goal and we are anxious to put it into action," Resch said. Legislation that reflects at least part of the plan is expected to be taken up by the House Commerce Committee on Thursday and the full House also could vote on it that day, DeRoche said.

About \$1 billion of the of the \$3 billion lump sum payment would be used to boost the state's lagging economy by investing in developing industries, such as life sciences, Resch said.

A panel of fewer than a dozen people, called the 21st Century Jobs Fund Authority, would oversee the investments and work with commercial lenders to invest in businesses in the state.

The money would be split between four separate lending programs: a commercial loan guarantee program, a private equity investment program, a venture capital program and a grant program for research and development.

Resch said a quarter of the lump sum, or \$500 million, would be deposited in the state's Medicaid Trust Fund, formed with surpluses in 2000 to carry the state through tough economic times. The trust fund had \$421 million a few years ago, but continued revenue shortfalls forced lawmakers to use all of it to plug budget holes.

State Rep. Paul Condino, D-Southfield, said he is looking forward to seeing more details of the plan "to ensure it doesn't shift the tax burden from wealthy corporations to Michigan citizens."

The House GOP's proposed tax cuts would be offset by cutting state spending and closing loopholes in the tax code, Resch said.

Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm laid out her own plan for business tax reform earlier this year. It would drop the Single Business Tax from 1.9 percent to 1.2 percent, reduce the reliance on payroll and property as factors in a company's tax assessment and ask more of companies with the biggest profits.

The governor's plan to boost investment would sell \$2 billion in bonds over 10 years. The money would go toward developing industries, including life sciences and alternative energies. But Granholm said Wednesday she is open to using some of the tobacco funds to boost investment.

"The bottom line is we need to create a fund that will enable us to invest in early-stage businesses, businesses that have a great idea," Granholm told Michigan Public Radio at a plant opening in Wayne County's Plymouth Township.

The Senate Republican investment plan would sell \$1 billion in bonds over 10 years.

Investment proposals laid out by the governor and approved by the Senate GOP would require a change to the state constitution and would have to be approved by voters this fall to take effect.

Senate Republicans want to phase out the state's major business tax, which they have said would boost the economy but critics noted could potentially cost state government nearly \$2 billion a year by 2025.

On the Net:

Michigan Legislature: <http://www.legislature.mi.gov>

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Battle Creek Enquirer

June 29, 2005

Letters to the editor

## **No one is stealing from so-called 'poor'**

I write to set the record straight for some people who sit around every day and wait for a handout. Recent policy changes by Republican representatives reducing the amount of money for the so-called "poor" have upset some and even led to the remark "rob from the poor to pay the rich."

In response, let me make this simple. The government has never made a dollar of its own. It takes money from some Americans and redistributes that money to other Americans. So if you are one of the so-called "poor" who gets free health care, free food through food stamps or WIC, or any other such handout, thank those so-called "rich" people who pay the taxes that you are taking.

I spent 20 years in the Army and now work in the education field. Not once have I had to use an unearned amount from any government or organization, thank God. Neither do I hold it against anyone that has been down on their luck and had to. As long as it doesn't become a way of life. But it is simply a lie to say Republicans are stealing from the so-called "poor." The poor don't pay taxes. In fact, through Earned Income Credit, they get back thousands more than they ever pay in.

If the so-called "poor" would like to improve their standard of living, get a job. Any job. Go to college or technical school to develop a trade. If able, join the military.

If you have made decisions in your life, such as having a child you can't support, that make it hard for you to go to school, sorry. Wish you had made better decisions in your past. Stop asking all the rest of us to make up for your mistakes.

Tom Lowe

U.S. Army, retired

Homer

## **HOUSE OKS SEX OFFENDER CRACKDOWN TO PROTECT KIDS**

Sex offenders and some felons would have new restrictions placed on where they live and work under a sweeping legislative package passed Wednesday by the House.

The 15-bill package is designed to prohibit those with a history of violence, particularly against children, from spending time in places that children learn and receive care.

Probably the most controversial proposal in the legislation would prohibit registered sex offenders from residing, working or loitering within 1,000 feet of a school if they are not already living or working there when the bill takes effect. Persons convicted of a sex crime after the bill takes effect would have to move within 90 days of their sentencing to the required distance from the school.

While this bill passed 99-7, the other bills passed unanimously or with just one "no" vote.

Penalties also would be toughened for sex offenders who fail to report in person to their local police agency as required.

Under the bills, all personnel working in a school would be subjected to a criminal background check. Currently, the background check is limited to teachers. Any personnel with a felony or a sex crime conviction would be barred from employment.

The bills also would require the Department of Information Technology to work with the Department of Education and Michigan State Police on developing an automated monthly comparison of the certified teachers list and the roster of all convictions in the state for any matches.

Operators of child day care facilities would be required to undergo a criminal background check to receive a license and would lose their license if they have a conviction for certain offenses. Day care operators would have to subject their employees to a criminal background check within one year of the bill taking effect (any job applicants in that first year would have to receive a background check).

Employment would be prohibited for those with certain criminal convictions, mainly sex crimes.

Youth organizations and sports leagues would be required to check applicants for volunteers and workers in their organizations to see if they are registered sex offenders. Failure to do so would be a felony.

Registered sex offenders who obtain employment or a volunteer position at a day care center, K-12 school, youth league/organization or a playground would be guilty of a felony.

Prosecutors would be allowed in sex crime cases to submit evidence that the defendant committed a sex crime against a child in the past.

The bills in the package are SB 130, HB 4402, HB 4928, HB 4929, HB 4930, HB 4931, HB 4932, HB 4933, HB 4934, HB 4935, HB 4936, HB 4937, HB 4957, HB 4958 and HB 4991.

# **Michigan Launches Registry to Protect Children from Inappropriate Email**

## ***First State in Nation to Launch Child Protection Registry***

LANSING – Governor Jennifer M. Granholm and Chairman of the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) J. Peter Lark today announced that on July 1, Michigan will become the first state in the nation to launch a child protection registry that will enable parents to guard children from unwanted electronic messages.

“Michigan’s child protection registry is a great way parents can shield their children from inappropriate email,” said Granholm. “I’m proud that Michigan is the first state in the nation to develop this registry and provide a way for parents and teachers to protect our children from unsuitable emails.”

Michigan’s child protection registry, called the Protect MI Child Registry, will allow individuals and schools to register email addresses to which minors have access. In the near future, instant message IDs, mobile phone numbers, fax numbers, pager numbers, and other contact points can also be registered. There is no cost to register.

On July 21, 2004, the Governor signed SB 1025, creating the Michigan Children’s Protection Registry Act (Public Act 241).

Public Act 241 prohibits persons from sending to registered addresses messages about products or services that are legally prohibited for children. Examples include pornography, tobacco, gambling, alcohol, illegal or prescription drugs, firearms, and fireworks. Senders of material are required to remove registered email addresses from their mailing lists within 30 days.

If a registered contact receives a prohibited message, a complaint may be filed with the Michigan Attorney General’s office. A first violation is a misdemeanor; subsequent violations are felonies. Civil penalties may also be sought.

“The Protect MI Child Registry has been designed to be very user-friendly,” said MPSC Chairman J. Peter Lark. “Parents and others who have expressed outrage and frustration at the endless stream of unwanted messages to which their children have access now have a way to reduce those messages.”

The registry was created and will be operated by Unspam Registry Services. For more details on the registry, visit [www.michigan.gov/protectmichild](http://www.michigan.gov/protectmichild). The site will go live for registrations at 7 a.m. (EST) on July 1.

Jun 30, 12:13 PM EDT

## **Parents can sign up children for do-not-e-mail registry**

By KATHY BARKS HOFFMAN  
Associated Press Writer

LANSING, Mich. (AP) -- Starting Friday, parents can sign their children up for what Michigan officials say is the nation's first registry aimed at keeping spammers from sending children e-mail relating to pornography, illegal or prescription drugs, alcohol, tobacco, gambling, firearms and fireworks. "From my perspective as a parent, I'm horrified by what comes in" to her three children's e-mail accounts, Gov. Jennifer Granholm said during a Thursday news conference. "We want to protect kids from these ... assaults."

Signing up for the registry is free, and parents soon will be able to add their children's instant message IDs, mobile phone numbers, fax numbers and pager numbers to the registry to keep children from being contacted through those as well. Both parents and schools will be able to register children's e-mail addresses. Senders must comply with the new law by Aug. 1. They face criminal and civil penalties for violating the law.

Although some Internet safety experts have said such anti-spam laws have been difficult to enforce and others worry the lists will give hackers a way to get access to a large database of children, Michigan Public Service Commission Chairman Peter Lark said safeguards being put in place will keep the registry secure. Because the e-mail addresses and other information will be encrypted, "nobody will know that the actual e-mail address is," including the Chicago company handling the database, Lark said.

On the Net:  
<http://www.michigan.gov/protectmichild>

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# Judge delays sexual assault trial for DNA information

Thursday, June 30, 2005

By Crystal Harmon TIMES WRITER

The trial of a Bay City woman accused of raping a 14-year-old boy has been delayed as prosecutors seek experts to interpret the results of DNA tests.

Amy M. Dyjak, 25, formerly of 1501 Center Ave., is charged with four counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct, three counts of second-degree criminal sexual conduct and three counts of delivery of marijuana. Her trial was to begin Tuesday in the courtroom of Bay County Circuit Judge Kenneth W. Schmidt, but on Monday Schmidt granted an adjournment request from the prosecutor's office.

Assistant Bay County Prosecutor Richard I. Dresser asked the judge for more time to have the results of paternity tests analyzed by a geneticist who would create an "index of parentage" to determine the likelihood that Dyjak's alleged victim is the father of her now 1-year-old baby. Since Dyjak was engaged to be married to the alleged victim's father at the time of the alleged assault, more detailed testing is required to determine the baby's likely father.

Dyjak remains in the Bay County Jail in lieu of a \$100,000 bond. Her attorney, Renee Brisbois, sought a reduction in the bond, and Dyjak also wrote a letter to circuit court asking the judge to release her from jail with a personal recognizance bond.

"I feel like I am mature and responsible enough to be released to my home," Dyjak wrote.

"I was and am the victim," Dyjak wrote. "I want to press charges on my accuser."

The bond reduction request was denied.

Dyjak has been evaluated by forensic psychologists and has been determined competent to stand trial.

A new trial date has been set for Aug. 2.

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Jun 30, 10:38 AM EDT

## **Dearborn man charged in fatal beating of wife with crowbar**

DEARBORN, Mich. (AP) -- A man who authorities say bludgeoned his wife with a crowbar at their home after she refused to give him the keys to the family van was charged Thursday with murder in her death.

Hashem Mohammad Abdullatif, 49, of Dearborn, was charged with one count of first-degree murder in the Tuesday attack on Jamileh Abdullatif, 38, after she died on Wednesday at an area hospital, the Wayne County prosecutor's office said.

Mohammad Abdullatif was arraigned Thursday and ordered held until a preliminary examination July 8 before Judge Richard Wygonik.

Police said he also struck two of his daughters, ages 14 and 16, when they tried to intervene, the Detroit Free Press reported. Police said two other children living in the home, ages 8 and 11, were not injured in the attack.

Hashem Abdullatif also is charged with two counts of assault with intent to murder in the assault on the children, the prosecutor's office said. Details on their conditions wasn't immediately available.

If convicted of first-degree murder, he would face a mandatory sentence of life in prison without parole.

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Thursday, June 30, 2005

## **Bat abortion tells a story of shame and sexual guilt**

By Laura Berman / The  
Detroit News

In the strange case of the boy who hit his pregnant girlfriend with a miniature baseball bat, surprisingly few stereotypes apply.

He's a decent high school student, eager for a career in law enforcement, a volunteer at the senior citizen center, and a member of the same high school creative writing club as his girlfriend. She's a Miss Armada runner-up, college-bound, intent on a career in psychology or teaching.

And yet, when she got pregnant, and -- her lawyer says -- couldn't find her way through the dense thicket of rules devised for unlucky minors who want to end a pregnancy, the couple were desperate enough to try to physically dislodge the fetus.

Now he faces assault charges, as a juvenile, under Michigan's Fetal Protection Act for hitting her in the abdomen with a down-sized souvenir baseball bat and intending to cause a miscarriage.

It's a tale out of the 1950s -- sexual guilt and shame in small-town America leading to violence -- that would be almost quaint if a young man's life weren't hanging in the balance and a 26-week-old fetus hadn't wound up buried in the field behind his mother and stepfather's farmhouse.

And this sad and strange case gets to the unsettled core of the decades-long wrestling over access to abortion.

"They had plans for their lives," says his mom, Tracy, who has auburn hair, a warm smile and a Harley tattoo on her left arm. (She and the boy's father agreed to be interviewed if their last names were not used, to maintain their son's privacy.)

Three decades after a Supreme Court decision paved the way for legal abortion, an energized Right to Life movement and conservative legislatures created an obstacle course for teens to maneuver around.

And in places like Armada, on the north exurban fringe of Macomb County, navigating the barriers is far tougher than in the city.

"Think about being 16, having to have four days when you can be away from home," says Miranda Massie, who represents the boy, now 17. Armada is 45 minutes from the county courthouse and worlds away from big-city sophistication.

Nobody argues that the girl was hurt in any way -- medical reports showed no bruises or other injuries. Nobody argues that the boy acted against her will. To Macomb County Prosecutor Eric Smith, the criminal charges aren't about these kids, but about the life that was growing inside her. They may be "and they seem to be fine young people," he says, but "someone needs to speak for this fetus, this unborn child. That is our job." By law, the girl is at once old enough to consent to sex, old enough to raise a child -- but not old enough to decide whether she can have an abortion. Not old enough to give her consent to what happened. Under the law, she's a pastiche of conflicting parts -- part woman, part should-be mother, part girl. Part vessel. So yes, I am sympathetic to the girl and to her boyfriend. Theirs is a sad story of sexual ignorance, fear, shame, guilt, bad judgment -- and of the baseball bat that's become today's stand-in for the wire coat hanger of yore.

*Laura Berman's column runs Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday in Metro. Reach her at (248) 647-7221 or [lberman@detnews.com](mailto:lberman@detnews.com).*

# **Miscarriage no crime, mom says**

## **Parents: Beating girlfriend bad choice**

*June 29, 200*

BY NATE TRELA  
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

With a few shovels of dirt and a short prayer, Tracy thought a parent's worst nightmare was almost over.

They'll need some counseling, she recalls thinking as she helped her 16-year-old son bury the fetus his girlfriend miscarried that October night. Losing a baby is hard, she thought, even if they had been adults.

It wasn't until later that she learned the teens tried to end the pregnancy with a series of beatings with a miniature baseball bat. Even then, she only thought of how scared and confused they must have been.

Neither she, nor the boy's father, nor her husband said what the teens did was a crime. "They're good kids, but all kids make poor choices sometimes," Tracy said, sitting in the kitchen of the century-old farmhouse in Richmond Township the family calls home. "I think they were misinformed, but they're not criminals."

Almost six months after their son was charged with an assault that prosecutors say ended her pregnancy, the boy's parents are opening up about their relationship with him and his girlfriend, who is now 17, and their frustration with the charge against him.

In a lengthy interview Monday, they laid out several reasons for coming forward -- to correct the image the public has of their son, to remind parents that they may not know as much about their children as they think, to raise concerns about the adequacy of sex education in schools and to speak out against laws that require minors to get approval from a judge or a parent to have an abortion.

Under the advice of Miranda Massie, the boy's attorney, the parents did not answer some questions she thought could jeopardize the boy's

chances of a fair trial.

Michael, Tracy's ex-husband and the boy's genetic father, said the teens may never have found themselves scrambling for a way to deal with the girl's pregnancy without the state's parental-consent law. Prosecutors and police say the teens didn't want to tell her parents she was pregnant, but they didn't know she could legally get an abortion without their permission if a judge approved.

The teens talked about ways to end the pregnancy before deciding on a series of beatings with a 22-inch souvenir baseball bat.

"If they thought they couldn't come to us and talk about this, how are they supposed to go in front of a judge and miss a day of school when they know the school will call the parents and say, 'Your kids aren't in school?' " Tracy asked.

If the boy is convicted of the 15-year felony, he could end up under the jurisdiction of the Macomb County Juvenile Court until he's 21. The girl will not be charged.

"The charge fits this crime like a glove," said Macomb County Prosecutor Eric Smith, who said he has received more than 100 calls, e-mail messages and letters saying he made the right decision by charging the boy in January. "The charge is very specific that if you assault someone and cause a miscarriage, you're guilty of the crime.

"By all accounts, he's otherwise a good young man, but he committed a crime and we prosecute the act, not the person or the person's past."

The boy, now 17, is living a relatively normal life with Tracy and Ron, his stepfather. His grades slipped a little toward the end of his sophomore year at Armada High School, but he's getting ready for football season and working as a busboy at a steakhouse.

Earlier this year, he took part in a 5-week program run by the county Sheriff's Office for teens interested in law enforcement careers. Since he was 12, he has taken part in a cadet program with the Lenox Township Fire Department.

And he went to the junior prom with the girl, who is getting ready for her senior year.

The family had hoped to be finished with the courts by now. The boy's trial was supposed to begin earlier this month, but scheduling conflicts pushed the trial into September.

Although Michael, Tracy and Ron said they had an open relationship

with their son, they had no idea he was sexually active. The only clue, in hindsight, was that the teens seemed to withdraw a little early last fall.

"We know you cannot sit there and be comfortable with what kind of relationship you think you have with your child," Michael said. "You need to look for certain signs that something is wrong."

Tracy learned of the pregnancy the night it ended. As she told police in November, she made no effort to cover up the miscarriage. She said she called a hospital and was told that they could take the fetus there, but it would be disposed of like any other biological waste.

"I couldn't see just throwing it in a Dumpster, or whatever they were going to do with it," she said. So very quietly, she and her son buried the fetus, a private end to what she thought was a private matter.

"Even our animals get a prayer and a burial," Michael said. "It was an embryo, but it was our blood. I agreed with her after the fact that it was the right thing to do."

Police seized the remains in November, and an autopsy determined the fetus was about 6 months along.

Inherent in the teens' actions was that they did not feel comfortable talking with their parents about the pregnancy, a feeling they've never explained.

"That hit us hard," Michael said. "We tried to do everything right, and I thought we did everything right. ... But for whatever reason, they felt that they couldn't come to us."

Second-guessing is painful, but, Tracy said, she wishes the teens had talked with them.

"I don't know exactly what we would have done, but we would have helped them go to her parents, and let them know what was going on, and talk as a family," she said. "We would have been right there either way."

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## **LETTERS**

Ann Arbor News

Wednesday, June 29, 2005

### **Clinicians deserve thanks for free health fair**

If you drove by the Packard Community Clinic on June 21, you probably wondered what was going on. Children of all ages and their parents were in the parking lot waiting for the doors to open so they could participate in the annual health fair. Before even entering the building they could learn about enrolling in Head Start, eating healthy foods, safety biking and many other things. Inside the children waited in line to get their height and weight checked, immunizations, eye exams, blood tests and more. They were there to get a healthy start and also to have fun. High school girls were doing face painting, the children got coloring books and books to take home to read. There were balloons, bubble blowing and healthy snacks.

What was the price for all of this? It was free. The health fair is an annual event started 24 years ago by Dr. Jerry and Mrs. Julia Walden.

It is an opportunity for the children in the community to get a medical screening. We owe a special thanks to the wonderful people at Packard Community Clinic for their dedication to the health of our children.

Eleanor P. Banyai, Ypsilanti



## **Former VP Nominee Pushes For Higher Minimum Wage**

### **Edwards Appears At Rally On Capitol Steps In Lansing**

POSTED: 4:20 pm EDT June 29, 2005

UPDATED: 4:41 pm EDT June 29, 2005

LANSING, Mich. -- Former Democratic vice presidential nominee John Edwards wants Michigan lawmakers to increase the minimum wage in the state.

The former North Carolina senator appeared at a rally on the Capitol steps today.

He says raising the minimum wage will help reduce the number of people living in poverty.

Democrats in the House and Senate introduced a package of bills to raise the minimum wage from five dollars and 15 cents to seven dollars and 15 cents over the next two years.

They want to gradually increase the rate, going up by 75 cents on July first. It would go up again by 75 cents in January 2006 and another 50 cents in January 2007.

Republican legislative leaders have been unwilling to take up the legislation because they are worried it will hurt the state's already struggling economy.

The minimum wage bills are House Bills 4514-18 and Senate Bills 318 and 320.

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